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Affect, Cognition, and Consumer Charity: the Moderating Role of Social Distance

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This paper demonstrates that affect and cognition interact with social distance between donor and recipient, resulting in differences in donation. Affect-driven donors are motivated by a consummatory goal of increasing “warm glow” utility, which occurs irrespective of social distance. However, cognition-driven donors are motivated by an instrumental goal of donating to a cause from which they derive utility, which is lessened by increasing social distance. Three experiments show support for the processing mode by social distance interaction. In the third experiment, a novel donation of extra credit points by student participants (time) results in similar effects as donation of money.

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the sense of loss women experience in regard to their maiden names will decrease over time, because they will gradually become accustomed to their new names and their new social roles. Therefore, the effect of a former identity will be a decay function.

We conducted a pretest to investigate whether the feeling of nostalgia toward a maiden name/single identity decreases as the length of a marriage increases. Thirty-nine females who spoke English and were U.S. residents participated in this study through MTurk for payment. The results showed that those who had been married less than five years experienced a feeling of nostalgia for their maiden names to a greater extent than those who had been married for more than five years. Therefore, the data supports our premise of the decaying effect of a former identity with time. We are now in the process of conducting a series of studies to test our predictions (a) in in-depth interviews with five married females and (b) in a survey.

The contributions of this research are as follows. First, to the best of our knowledge, the current work takes the first step in focusing on how individuals respond to the extinction phase of their former identities and the adoption of new social identities. Insights into the manner in which people respond to both former and new identities would expand our understanding of the influence of social identity on cognition and behavior. Therefore, the current research unlocks the door extending this line of research on the transformation of self-identity and to a further understanding of its effect on consumer behavior. In addition to theoretical contributions, this study has practical implications in that it could provide marketing practitioners with strategic ideas for targeting consumers in the identity transformation period, such as new persuasion points and appropriate timing of the persuasion points.

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Affect, Cognition, and Consumer Charity: The Moderating Role of Social Distance

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Charitable donation is important in transformative consumer research. This paper investigates the use of affect versus cognition in consumer donation and its interaction with social distance. We demonstrate that affect-driven consumers tend to donate more than cognition-driven consumers. In addition, the difference between affect-driven and cognition-driven consumers is more evident with greater social distance between the donating consumer and the recipient of her charity. This interactive effect is due to the differences in goals pursued by different types of consumers.

A consummatory goal is particularly relevant for affect-driven consumers (Millar and Tesser, 1986). Motivated by the consummatory goal, people engage in behavior that is intrinsically rewarding (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Pham 1998). Past research shows that when a consummatory goal is made salient, people tend to make decisions based on affect (Pham 1998). In charitable donations, the consummatory goal may be manifested as maximizing "warm-glow" utility (Andreoni, 1989). In such cases, donors are primarily interested in the intrinsic satisfaction stemming from their behavior of donation of resources.

In contrast, an instrumental goal is important for cognition-driven consumers (Millar and Tesser, 1986). Such a goal is secondary - while the behavior may not be rewarding in itself, the undertaking may help to achieve another goal (Millar and Tesser, 1986). Pham (1998) shows that an instrumental goal decreases the use of affect in arriving at decisions. In the context of donation, an instrumental goal may be manifested as a desire to contribute to causes similar to "public-goods" and consequent utility (Andreoni, 1989). That is, donors may sometimes contribute so as to derive utility that comes from consumption of the cause donated to. For example, a donation made to National Public Radio (NPR) may be made to ensure adequate funding for NPR to continue broadcasting.

We argue that the consummatory goal of enhancing "warm-glow" utility and the instrumental goal of increasing the provision of "public-goods" may be differentially influenced by the social distance between donor and recipient. Social distance refers to the degree of social similarity and social connection between oneself and another (Trope, Liberman and Wakslak, 2007). While social distance is known

to be an important factor in the donation literature (Winterich, Mittal and Ross, 2009), its interaction with “warm-glow” and “public-goods” types of utilities is unclear. We reason that as social distance increases, cognition-driven donors may find it increasingly difficult to derive the “public-goods” type of utility given their instrumental goals. Consumers may not donate to a radio station at greater distance as it is unlikely that they will listen to its broadcast. In contrast, affect-driven donors may continue to satisfy their consummatory goal because they derive “warm-glow” utility regardless of the social distance between them and the recipient. For example, donating to help a starving child in a far-off community will still provide them with “warm-glow” as much as will donating to help a child in their immediate social circle. This reasoning leads to our prediction that the gap between affect-driven and cognition-driven consumers in donation becomes pronounced as the social distance between the consumer and the recipient increases. More formally,

Hypothesis: The beneficial effect of greater reliance on affect rather than cognition will be exacerbated when the donor and recipient are separated by greater social distance and attenuated when the donor and recipient are separated by lesser social distance. An interaction will exist between the relative use of affect and cognition and social distance in donation.

Support for the above hypothesis was found in three experiments with undergraduate students as participants. The stimulus for the first experiment was adapted from the work of Kogut and Ritov (2007). Participants were asked for their hypothetical donation to assist a group of either American or Indian tourists lost on an island in the Indian Ocean after the 2004 tsunami. In this manipulation physical distance is held constant. Participants reported their relative use of affect versus cognition in their decision about the donation using the five-item scale from Shiv and Fedorikhin (1999). The dependent variable was the amount out of \$10 they would have donated if they were compensated with that amount for their participation. The interaction between social distance and the relative use of affect versus cognition was marginally significant, such that at closer social distance the use of affect versus cognition made little difference to the proposed donation. Whereas at greater social distance the use of affect versus cognition led to significant differences in the proposed donation. The stimulus for the second experiment was modified so that participants contemplated hypothetical donations to help either American or Russian tourists. This was done to rule out a possible confound of India not having similar resources as the USA. There was a significant interaction between the relative use of affect versus cognition and social distance. The third experiment was designed to address possible criticism of the first two experiments as not involving actual donation. Undergraduates who received ten extra points for research participation in their introductory marketing class (graded on 1,000 points) were asked how many points out of the ten they would donate to help either a marketing or a nursing student who was unable to participate in the extra credit session. Following completion of the questionnaire, participants were debriefed and reassured that they would receive their ten points. Again, a significant interaction between the relative use of affect versus cognition and social distance was found.

In three studies we find that affect-driven consumers tend to donate more and this effect is pronounced in situations of greater social distance. These results contribute to our understanding of charitable behavior, in terms of the roles of affect and cognition as well as the moderating effect of social distance. Our findings may help not-for-profit organizations that seek to maximize donations, especially those facing the difficult situation of donors reducing donations if they perceive greater social distance to the potential recipient (Burnstein, Crandall and Kitayama, 1994). This research indicates that it may be in the interest of such organizations to induce more reliance on affect by donors.

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